

& they stood there staring at each other
& cussing each other & then no shit they
started duking it out
right there in left field
while the ball sat on the grass
& this old guy who could hardly run
circled the bases & the ump just
said fuck it this is ridiculous
& called the game
but it was a lot of fun it
really was & next time we're
going to take it easy I
mean it's only a game
right?

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

it's the same every time they call
& they call every holiday
three of them talking at once
my mother starting it off
how is your wife's weight
she's at that age where you
have to be careful
& would she like some earrings
for Christmas
& then it's which relatives have died
& which relatives have married
& she'll be sending clippings
from the papers
some high school classmates in politics
& my old friend Rick called her
he's designing developments now
making a fortune
sounds very happy
& then it's my grandmother
on the rec room extension
she wants to know when they're
going to put my poetry
on the market
& why don't I write stories
I could write just one book
like Gone With the Wind
or Peyton Place
& I'd be set for life
never have to write again
& no one understands why I write
the things I do
& then it's back to my mother
on the kitchen phone
a martini quiver in her voice

she is being very frank with me
she says
she thought poetry was supposed
to be beautiful
she's embarrassed by my writing
she's ashamed to show my books
to her friends
& she never knows what to say
when someone asks what I'm doing
& my father's cholesterol count is
down to normal
& he's back on the beer
the gout hasn't bothered him
in months
& I can hear him belching & wheezing
into the phone
on another extension
& my mother scolding him
say something to your son, Albert
it's thanksgiving
he's 3000 miles away
& there are a few minutes of
strained football talk
some jokes about the catholic church
& my mother's pumpkin pie
& finally the inevitable silence
the four of us listening to
cross country static.

well, I guess I better go
my mother says
this is costing us
& then the three in chorus
wishing me a happy thanksgiving.

TWO GENERALS

this old woman lives across the street
she wears an army surplus overcoat
when she walks her dog
walks him all hours of the day
never stays out long
dresses the dog in fancy sweaters
carries him in her arms
when another dog comes near
lets him crap in this
patch of grass
right under my window
she acts a bit like a maniac
a movie maniac
she could be Peter Lorre's wife
& she's always looking around
looking over her shoulder
when she walks him